

Providing a 'broad and balanced' music education in school: a clarification for school and strategic leaders

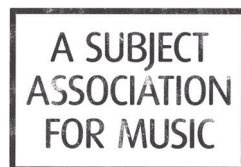
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Music is a wonderfully diverse subject – inevitably so, since it is creative, practical and best learned through a direct engagement with a vast range of sounds and many different sound worlds (which means that you don't just learn *about* music: you also learn *through* music and *by* making music)

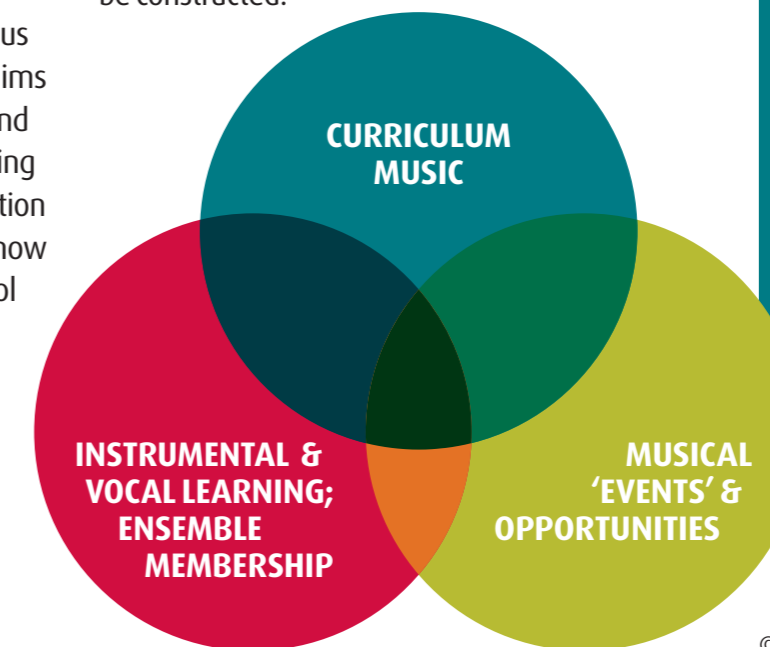
For leaders who are either interested in or directly responsible for improving musical provision, this diverse nature of music as a subject is made even more complex by the range of activities and opportunities that make up a fully 'broad and balanced' music education. There are so many possibilities that it is not always easy to be clear about their separate purposes and functions – and especially about the primary learning focus that each requires. This document therefore aims to clarify how the different parts of a 'broad and balanced' music education fit together, covering both their separate identities and their integration into a balanced whole. It has been produced now to offer a set of principles against which school and strategic leaders can judge the validity and value of current education initiatives; over time, leaders might also use it as an audit of their own settings' provision.



In its simplest form, school-based music education consists of three major areas:

- **curriculum music** (i.e. classroom music: EYFS / National Curriculum lessons or KS4 classes)
- **instrumental / vocal learning and music ensembles or groups** requiring regular membership
- **musical events and opportunities** (concerts, workshops, festivals etc.)

It can be helpful to see these separate areas and their inter-relationship visually, as it provides a clear model of how a 'broad and balanced' music education within schools can be constructed:



Three key points to remember

1. Curriculum music (regular, classroom music lessons) is the only part of music education which **all** pupils are statutorily entitled to. It is the bed-rock of a 'broad and balanced' music education and effective provision for curriculum music is essential if music is to flourish in a school.
2. At the same time, all three areas depend on each other: if one area loses effectiveness, it will inevitably reduce the impact of another area – and pupils' overall music education will suffer.
3. Informal musical learning (pupils' own listening, participation in group or community music making etc.) will weave around and through all of this: we need to be constantly aware of how to support it and build on it across all other provision.

Defining the key character and purpose for each of the three main areas of music education*

	Curriculum music	Instrumental learning & ensemble membership	Musical events & opportunities
Primary learning & purpose	To help all pupils develop (through practical, creative exploration) their musical understanding: to understand how music works and therefore how music enables and conveys meaning.	To help pupils learn how to play an instrument / how to sing at advanced levels, so that they can play music on their own and / or with others.	To help pupils learn about the joy and power of musical engagement and performance.
Process & specific areas of learning	<p>It is essential to recognise that the best way of developing musical understanding is through practical engagement in creative music making. Pupils should therefore develop their understanding by investigating practically a range of ways of making music (drawing on examples from across time and place). By doing this, pupils will also be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learning how to compose their own music, and how to re-create the music of others through arranging, improvising and performing work building their knowledge of the ways that the core elements of music are used to create different sorts of music developing strong analysis and evaluative listening skills to identify, refine and appraise both their own music and the music of others. 	<p>It takes years of dedicated, individual effort to achieve high standards: regular / daily practice is essential and lessons must be taught by music educators who have real expertise on the instrument being learnt. For these reasons, very specific skills and knowledge are at the heart of instrumental / vocal learning. Although they will vary across different instruments, the skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fine motor control of different parts of the body to execute particular skills the reading of detailed notation the development of sophisticated aural acuity. 	<p>Pupils need to be offered many opportunities to participate in additional activities which focus on the sharing and performance of music – very often with large groups, and sometimes with the whole school and / or wider community. These may include house music competitions, concerts / shows, residencies or workshops with professional musicians, trips to major performance venues, participation in area-wide concerts etc. In doing so, they will learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> about different sorts of music that they may not otherwise encounter and consequently the different ways that musicians from different genres or cultures make their music about the effect of sustained and long periods of musical engagement – the process of being part of a day’s workshop with an opera company, for instance, leading to a performance for parents, provides a focus of learning that is unique in its intensity about the power of musical performance, and its transformative effects on individuals and groups.

* while many features will appear across all three areas, these tables emphasise the **primary** focus of each one.

	Curriculum music	Instrumental learning & ensemble membership	Musical events & opportunities
Key features	Creative exploration is essential within curriculum music: it is one of the most distinctive features that marks it out as different from other aspects of music education. Creative music making should also be constantly informed by the contexts within which it exists, whether simple (the storytelling behind Goldilocks) or quite sophisticated (creating music for adverts reflecting brands or social allegiances).	The strong emphasis on skills immediately marks out instrumental learning as different from classroom music. Effective instrumental teaching will inevitably also develop other aspects of musical learning (awareness of different styles of music; understanding of musical devices and structures etc.); but skills are the main focus.	Inspirational venues, striking music and the impact of large numbers of people coming together to collaborate in performance are critical to this area of music education. It is also likely that many of the opportunities will be led by professionals, or by local musicians with specific areas of expertise.
Bear in mind	<p>Curriculum music is about helping all pupils to learn how to develop their musicality; it is not about helping some pupils to become professional musicians. We therefore need to be absolutely clear that curriculum music is not primarily about learning to play a musical instrument.</p> <p>Learning an instrument is a critical part of a broad and balanced music education (and the opportunity to do so must be offered to all pupils) but curriculum music is for quite different, broader and more creative forms of musical learning.</p>	<p>There is also research that shows instrumental and vocal learning develops a range of generic learning skills which are important to wider education: there is a growing weight of evidence that learning an instrument helps to develop executive functioning of the brain, perseverance and resilience, and self-esteem. Being part an ensemble also enables pupils to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a good understanding of team work from being part of an ensemble; learn how to both take a lead and respond to the leadership of others; understand how group identity can both develop and inform personal growth. 	Additional musical opportunities can only offer a patchwork of learning. This will not be linearly progressive, but will require pupils to take up a range of opportunities, and to knit them together in their own way to form a personal understanding of the power of music. However, it is essential that all pupils are both <i>offered</i> the chance to participate (i.e. a whole year group given the chance to take part in a singing event), and <i>expected</i> to engage with at least some of the opportunities on offer (i.e. sharing classwork in school concerts).

The primacy of curriculum music within the model

There is a long-held view amongst music education experts that curriculum music is the foundation of an effective music education: it is the most significant of the three main areas (curriculum or classroom music; instrumental learning / ensembles; and music making events / opportunities).

We should also recognise that curriculum music is for all pupils, and for all of EYFS / Key Stages 1-3. This makes it unique: curriculum music is a sustained, long-term and regular form of learning for all pupils, but each of the other aspects of music education have at least some element of option within them.

The interplay between the components

We need to recognise that the major areas of a 'broad and balanced' music education must inform each other – they are not completely isolated aspects of learning. While the mechanics for developing this interplay across the major areas are many and varied, teachers and managers do need to plan for them to happen, e.g. using classroom understanding of dance music to inform a violinist's waltz performance; or getting pupils to use their saxophone playing skills to inform and improve their understanding of blues in the classroom.

Summary

Music education is multi-faceted. An effective, 'broad and balanced' provision will offer:

- **Curriculum music**
Its focus is on understanding music, creative exploration of musical ideas, and developing strong evaluative skills informed by contextual awareness.
- **Instrumental learning and ensemble membership**
The focus here is on the development of specific playing and aural skills, as well as understanding how to contribute to a team and how to develop a shared, group identity.
- **Additional events and opportunities**
The learning is here about the power of music to inspire and motivate individuals and whole communities, as well as learning about the intense processes required to access the highest possible musical outcomes across a range of types of music.

Although each of these areas has a unique form of musical learning as its main focus, the interplay between the different components is critical and must be deliberately planned for.



Incorporated Society of Musicians

The Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's professional body for musicians and a nationally recognised subject association for music. Founded in 1882, we are dedicated to promoting the importance of music, defending the rights of those working in the music profession and protecting music education.

We support nearly 9,500 members working in all areas of music from classroom music teachers, peripatetic instrumental/singing teachers and private music teachers to performers, composers and administrators. We are a financially independent not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliation.

If you would like to find out more about the ISM or join us as a member, please visit ism.org



Incorporated Society of Musicians Trust

The Incorporated Society of Musicians Trust (ISM Trust), the ISM's sister charity, was created in 2014 to advance education, the arts and to promote health. Our primary focus is to deliver high quality professional development by leading practitioners from the ISM and also in partnership with other organisations.

We are dedicated to creating pioneering resources to support music and all those who work in the sector including music educators, performers and composers. It also delivers work through webinars, regional seminars, training events and advice packs.

If you would like to make a donation to support the work of the ISM Trust, please visit ismtrust.org

Kevin Rogers

Kevin Rogers has wide experience of music education in England. Having taught secondary music (including as an 11-18 comprehensive head of music) he moved into advisory support, providing CPD for all aspects of music education and all age ranges. He was County Inspector with Hampshire County Council's Music Service from 1999 – 2018. During this time, he was seconded to the Secondary National Strategy to lead on its KS3 music programme, and the subsequent development of the Strategy's KS3 music web site. He also worked with QCDA on two national assessment projects involving music at KS3.

Although most of his work therefore focussed on class teaching in schools, Kevin also supported instrumental / vocal teachers in projects exploring progression, transition and the nature of musical learning in small group tuition. Though now officially retired, he continues to influence and campaign for music education through the ISM's Council.

